

SUMMARY

This report is an evaluation of the first fielding of a Humanitarian, Reconstruction, and Stabilization Team (HRST) by the State Department's Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS). The evaluation took place during a 5-day exercise, Fuertas Defensas – 05 (FD05), 12-16 September, 2005 at U.S. Southern Command (USSOUTHCOM). Participation in this exercise represents the initial formation and deployment of an HRST. The S/CRS objectives for the exercise were to observe the HRST as it operated with a Combatant Command staff, determine areas of sustainment and improvement, and codify those observations and determinations to refine the HRST concept of operations.

Created in the spring of 2004, S/CRS was given the mission to lead, coordinate, and institutionalize U.S. Government civilian capacity to prevent or prepare for post-conflict situations, and to help stabilize and reconstruct societies in transition from conflict or civil strife, so they can reach a sustainable path toward peace, democracy, and a market economy. The personnel available to S/CRS come from within the Department of State and as seconded staff from other Departments within the U.S. Government. As stated in the S/CRS web site (<http://www.crs.state.gov>), the Core Objectives of the organization are to work across the U.S. Government and with the world community to anticipate state failure, avert it when possible, and help post-conflict states lay a foundation for lasting peace, good governance, and sustainable development.

One of the instruments the S/CRS is exploring to meet its objectives is the HRST. The HRST is formed out of the various Executive Departments and Agencies to support the planning process of a Combatant Commander (COCOM) within the Department of Defense. The staff of a COCOM may not have the requisite functional or specific area expertise to develop a fully responsive plan when faced with stability, transition and reconstruction operations. Members of the HRST are chosen by S/CRS and the Country Reconstruction and Stabilization Group (CRSG)¹ to augment the planning capability

¹ A CRSG is established at the direction of the Principals Committee of the National Security Council and provides specific advice, coordination and policy planning for a specific mission (acting as the equivalent of a Policy Coordinating Committee).

within a COCOM staff for specific missions and situations. It provides capabilities not found in the Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG) or the office of the Political Advisor (POLAD) located at the COCOM, as the HRST adds expertise and represents other involved agencies and the CRSG. The HRST will co-locate with the element of the COCOM staff that is conducting the planning for the campaign, mission, or exercise, interfacing at both the Command Level through a Team Leader of Ambassadorial rank and through the technical elements of the COCOM staff through the various members of the team. HRSTs are designed to function in the planning domain, not the operations domain.

Exercise Fuertas Defensas – 05 consisted of two major requirements for the COCOM staff: to develop a Commander's Estimate for one part of the mission, and a Commander's Assessment for a follow-on element of the overall campaign. A Commander's Estimate is a document that discusses the overall situation from friendly, adversarial and neutral perspectives; establishes the intent of the commander; and presents a Course of Action (COA) analysis of the various potential alternatives that could meet that intent. A Commander's Assessment is similar to an Estimate, but does not include the COA analysis or recommend a COA. In a typical progression, an Assessment would precede an Estimate, which in turn would precede the final Plan.

FD05 was not an operational exercise, but a planning exercise, so the demand for a control group or for computer simulation was minimal. The exercise was controlled by a White Cell and the Joint Exercise Control Group (JECG). S/CRS was represented on the White Cell. In addition, daily contact with the Coordinator and Regional Bureau Assistant Secretary in Washington provided additional context and realism for the exercise.

The overall assessment of the value of HRST contributions to the COCOM planning process was overwhelmingly positive. Despite "start-up" challenges faced by the HRST and COCOM staff, the HRST made an immediate impact by providing policy guidance, situational context and planning factors to the staff and the commander. The SOUTCHOM Commander commented that FD 05 demonstrated the best interagency participation and influence in an exercise that he had ever seen. This positive perception was echoed at all senior leader and division chief levels. The availability of the HRST was listed as the first priority "sustain" at the general level After Action Review (AAR). The HRST provided a significantly disproportionate percentage of the content to the two staff products that were the exercise deliverables, demonstrating extraordinary value

given the small size of the team compared to the COCOM staff. The IDA team documented ten findings, summarized below:

Finding: The portal and knowledge management issues reinforced the observation that teams deployed from S/CRS (HRST and Advance Civilian Teams (ACT)) must have information management personnel embedded.

Finding: The computer workstations used by the staff have the software *InfoWork Space* installed but the command did not use it, preferring to work through physical meetings and e-mail. Further research indicated that Defense Collaborative Tool Suite (DCTS) was also available, but the observer could not confirm that it was being used by the command in the staff planning process or with the components.

Finding: There is a need for some cataloging capability and a central repository for information, and to gather the HRST together periodically and “calibrate” members to the dynamic situation, making sure they are caught up on the latest situation and guidance.

Finding: The COCOM staff had not determined all aspects of their staff “Battle Rhythm” (the timing, location, participation, duration, and deliverables of their boards, centers, and cells) for the planning process. Combined with the ambiguity inherent in the scenario and exercise artificialities, this situation presented the HRST with significant early challenges as members sought to inform and coordinate with the COCOM staff. The entire situation was so dynamic that the HRST had a hard time latching on to the “knowns” in the COCOM process so that it could determine its own internal and external techniques and procedures to mesh with the COCOM staff. This situation improved markedly over the course of the exercise.

Finding: The HRST could not establish visibility over or connectivity with all working groups. The COCOM staff posted the Battle Rhythm to the web portal on a daily basis, but not at regular times, causing confusion on when and where staff actions were occurring.

Finding: The HRST/Joint Effects Working Group (JEWG) became increasingly effective as the group moved toward specific issues and away from generalities. In the closing briefing to the command and staff, the COCOM staff officer leading the JEWG referred to it as the “Interagency Effects Working Group” reflecting the value added of the HRST to the process.

Finding: The levels of activity represented by the military in Effects Based Planning (EBP) and by the HRST were decidedly different. The COCOM staff was much more likely to engage in wide-ranging discussions of conceptual topics and strategic and operational activities in general terms, such as “Conduct Information Operations,” whereas the HRST personnel tended to focus on more specific actions that could be taken, such as “Negotiate Article 98 Agreements.”

Finding: The HRST communicated within its own membership and received messages from throughout the COCOM staff. The HRST was increasingly sought out by a widening range of staff elements as a result of member reputation for expertise and work ethic.

Finding: Not all messages delivered via e-mail to the HRST as a group were received by all members of the HRST, possibly indicating the need for a HRST-wide alias to preclude future dropped mail boxes.

Finding: Members of the HRST were not consistent in their use of electronic media to send and receive messages and coordinate with the COCOM staff. This reflected more of a lack of standardized techniques and training than a lack of effort or capability to coordinate.

The IDA team also conducted interviews to determine the level of training and continuity in the HRST staff. Predeployment training sessions were not well attended prior to the exercise, but most of the HRST members indicated that they would be available for the next exercise in the scenario, Blue Advance, which is scheduled for the spring of 2006 (Blue Advance 06). Exercise participation, preparation, and planning are significant “organizational culture” challenges for civilian agencies, many of which do not have the resources or processes to accommodate exercise-type training. Impressively, however, many of the civilian agencies committed to providing the same persons as members of the HRST for future exercises with this particular command.

The interviews and observations also yielded issues and recommendations pertaining to organization, process and products:

The HRST is not organized or manned for sustainable operations on a 24 hours a day, 7 days a week basis, as may be required in an operational setting.

The HRST does not have a current internal work assignment and management process.

The HRST provided input only through individual member participation in and contribution to COCOM staff boards, centers, and cells, and was not requested to provide any input or written product to the exercise staff as a group or HRST product. The team leader did articulate HRST consensus positions during senior staff meetings and discussions.

The sum of exercise participation analysis, interviews, and observations yielded the following major recommendations:

Recommendation: The U.S. Mission/Country Team should deploy a person with in-country knowledge back to the COCOM to serve as liaison and give firsthand accounts of situation and points of contact.

Recommendation: S/CRS should establish HRST (and by implication, ACT) manning documents that include some redundancy for continuous operations and include administrative and operational support personnel (two each) to maintain connectivity, files, and situational awareness for the HRST.

Recommendation: In the process of refining operational concepts for the HRST, S/CRS should develop internal and external SOPs to establish procedures and responsibilities, and to furnish to receiving commands to enhance integration and the planning process. In a sustained process, the HRST will not be as self-contained and must devote the energy to using Collaborative Information Environments (CIE).

Recommendations: S/CRS should ensure that the concepts of operations for HRST and ACT emphasize that the teams are deployed with the capability and authorities to produce Team products as well as augmenting COCOM planning cells with Subject Matter Experts (SME) and personnel resources. (The risk is that HRST value can be diminished if it is used solely to provide individual SME for embedding in COCOM staff processes. While this exercise only touched on the possibility in once instance, it is conceivable that the COCOM commander could turn to the HRST leader with a requirement to provide input or guidance to the commander and staff in the form of an HRST position).

Recommendation: S/CRS should develop a briefing book, or template, that can be used to familiarize and train follow-on HRST/ACT personnel on situation assessment and operational procedures and can be provided to COCOM staffs as a primer on S/CRS capabilities and authorities.

IDA will support continued refinement of the HRST and ACT concepts of operations in future preparatory sessions and exercises.

APPENDIX A

ACRONYMS